

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2788

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SUBJECT: ROK REACTION TO FALL OF CAMBODIA

1. FALL OF CAMBODIA, ALTHOUGH FULLY ANTICIPATED BY KOREAN OBSERVERS, WAS SOBERING FOR ROK. EXPRESSIONS OF SHOCK CAME FROM POLITICAL LEADERS AND PRESS, WHICH CARRIED POIGNANT STATEMENT BY KHMER AMBASSADOR TO ROK THAT LOSS OF PHNOM PENH "MADE OUR HEARTS BLEED".

2. SYMPATHY FOR CAMBODIANS WAS OVERTAKEN IN EDITORIALS BY GENERAL CRITICISM OF USG FOR PERMITTING FALL OF GKR. TERMING US POLICY SHORT-SIGHTED AND INCOHERENT, TONGA ILBO SAID US SHOULD HAVE OPTED FOR SIHANOUK IN 1970 INSTEAD OF LON NOL. CHOSUN ILBO QUESTIONED WISDOM OF US GETTING INVOLVED IN FIRST PLACE IF IN END IT SO READILY ABANDONED KHMER. CHUNGANG ILBO SAW ASIAN ALLIANCES WITH US "QUICKLY CRUMBLING," AND GOVERNMENT SEOUL SHINMUN SAID THAT FALL OF GKR PROMPTED BY SUSPENSION OF US AID INDICATES THAT NEED FOR ROK SELF-RELIANT DEFENSE CANNOT BE OVER-EMPHASIZED.

3. CHOSUN ILBO PRINTED VARYING REACTIONS FROM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FIGURES, INCLUDING DRP FLOOR LEADER KIM YONG-TAE, WHO LINKED FALL OF CAMBODIA TO KOREA AND KIM IL-SUNG'S "OMINOUS" VISIT TO PEKING.

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KIM'S YUCHONGHOE COUNTERPART YI YONG-KUN, SAYING HE

WAS SHOCKED BY NEWS FROM PHNOM PENH, EXPRESSED HOPE
THAT KIM IL-SUNG WILL NOT MISCALCULATE SITUATION IN
KOREA. IF HE DOES, YI SAID, "WE MUST MAKE IT AN
OPPORTUNITY TO LIBERATE NORTH KOREA AND UNIFY THE
LAND." NDP DEPUTY FLOOR LEADER HWANG NAK-CHU SAID
"WE HAVE CLEARLY SEEN WHAT RESULT CORRUPTION, POPULAR
DISTRUST AND DICTATORSHIP HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT, AND
ONLY DEMOCRACY CAN PREVENT SUCH A TRAGEDY." AGREEING
THAT LON NOL REGIME WAS CORRUPT, INDEPENDENT KWON O-TAE
BLAMED TRAGEDY ON GKR FAILURE TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL
UNITY. "YOU CAN ASK FOR OTHERS' HELP," HE SAID,
"ONLY WHEN YOU ARE PREPARED TO RECEIVE SUCH HELP."
SNEIDER

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